



# UTILITY PATENT APPLICATION TRANSMITTAL

(Only for new nonprovisional applications under 37 CFR 1.53(b))

Attorney Docket No.	35.C13752
First Named Inventor or Application Identifier	
MASAHIKO KUBOTA, ET AL.	
Express Mail Label No.	

## APPLICATION ELEMENTS

See MPEP chapter 600 concerning utility patent application contents.

1. ☐ Fee Transmittal Form  
(Submit an original, and a duplicate for fee processing)
2. ☒ Specification Total Pages
3. ☒ Drawing(s) (35 USC 113) Total Sheets
4. ☒ Oath or Declaration Total Pages
- a. ☐ Newly executed (original or copy)
- b. ☒ Unexecuted for information purposes
- c. ☐ Copy from a prior application (37 CFR 1.63(d))  
(for continuation/divisional with Box 17 completed)  
[Note Box 5 below]
- i. ☐ **DELETION OF INVENTOR(S)**  
Signed Statement attached deleting inventor(s)  
named in the prior application, see 37 CFR  
1.63(d)(2) and 1.33(b).
5. ☐ Incorporation By Reference (useable if Box 4c is checked)  
The entire disclosure of the prior application, from which a copy of the  
oath or declaration is supplied under Box 4c, is considered as being  
part of the disclosure of the accompanying application and is hereby  
incorporated by reference therein.

## ADDRESS TO:

Assistant Commissioner for Patents  
Box Patent Application  
Washington, DC 20231

6. ☐ Microfiche Computer Program (Appendix)
7. Nucleotide and/or Amino Acid Sequence Submission  
(if applicable, all necessary)
- a. ☐ Computer Readable Copy
- b. ☐ Paper Copy (identical to computer copy)
- c. ☐ Statement verifying identity of above copies

## ACCOMPANYING APPLICATION PARTS

8. ☐ Assignment Papers (cover sheet & document(s))
9. ☐ 37 CFR 3.73(b) Statement ☐ Power of Attorney  
(when there is an assignee)
10. ☐ English Translation Document (if applicable)
11. ☐ Information Disclosure Statement (IDS)/PTO-1449 ☐ Copies of IDS Citations
12. ☐ Preliminary Amendment
13. ☒ Return Receipt Postcard (MPEP 503)  
(Should be specifically itemized)
14. ☐ Small Entity Statement(s) ☐ Statement filed in prior application  
Status still proper and desired
15. ☐ Certified Copy of Priority Document(s)  
(if foreign priority is claimed)
16. ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

17. If a CONTINUING APPLICATION, check appropriate box and supply the requisite information:

☐ Continuation ☐ Divisional ☐ Continuation-in-part (CIP) of prior application No. \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

## 18. CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS

☒ Customer Number or Bar Code Label  or ☐ Correspondence address below  
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CLAIMS	(1) FOR	(2) NUMBER FILED	(3) NUMBER EXTRA	(4) RATE	(5) CALCULATIONS
	TOTAL CLAIMS (37 CFR 1.16(c))	24 -20 =	4	X \$ 18.00 =	\$ 72.00
	INDEPENDENT CLAIMS (37 cfr 1.16(b))	4-3 =	1	X \$ 78.00 =	\$ 78.00
	MULTIPLE DEPENDENT CLAIMS (if applicable) (37 CFR 1.16(d))			\$260.00 =	\$ 260.00
				BASIC FEE (37 CFR 1.16(a))	\$ 760.00
	Total of above Calculations =				\$ 1,170.00
	Reduction by 50% for filing by small entity (Note 37 CFR 1.9, 1.27, 1.28).				
	TOTAL =				\$1,170.00

19. Small entity status

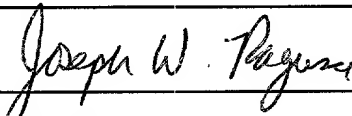
- a. ☐ A Small entity statement is enclosed
- b. ☐ A small entity statement was filed in the prior nonprovisional application and such status is still proper and desired.
- c. ☐ Is no longer claimed.

20. ☒ A check in the amount of \$ 1,170.00 to cover the filing fee is enclosed.

21. ☐ A check in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to cover the recordal fee is enclosed.

22. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to credit overpayments or charge the following fees to Deposit Account No. 06-1205:

- a. ☒ Fees required under 37 CFR 1.16.
- b. ☐ Fees required under 37 CFR 1.17.
- c. ☐ Fees required under 37 CFR 1.18.

SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT, ATTORNEY, OR AGENT REQUIRED	
NAME	Joseph W. Ragusa (38,586)
SIGNATURE	
DATE	August 27, 1999

LIQUID DISCHARGE HEAD, LIQUID DISCHARGE METHOD, AND  
LIQUID DISCHARGE APPARATUS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

5 Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a liquid  
discharge head, a liquid discharge method and a liquid  
discharge apparatus, in which a change of state  
including generation of a bubble in a liquid is  
10 generated using thermal energy and the liquid is  
discharged from a discharge port in accordance with the  
change of state thereby to record. The present  
invention can be applied to devices such as a general  
printer, a copy machine, a facsimile including a  
15 communication system, and a word processor including a  
printer section, and further to an industrial recording  
device compositely combined with various kinds of  
processing units.

Related Background Art

20 A liquid discharge apparatus, particularly, an ink  
jet recording apparatus is ideal as a non-impact  
recording apparatus in modern business offices and  
other clerical work sections where quiet is required.  
Recently, from demands for higher density and higher  
25 speed recording properties and easier maintenance  
properties, further development and improvement of the  
ink jet recording head have been carried out.

Particularly, in an ink jet recording apparatus using techniques disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 4,723,129, a high density and high speed recording can be sufficiently performed by the structural feature.

5 Therefore, the device is greatly supported in the market. Further, as one of techniques which can attain the high density and high speed for the recording head, U.S. Patent No. 4,429,321 provides an ink jet recording head having a highly integrated structure.

10 On the other hand, to attain the recording of a high image quality using a recording head, which discharges only a desired discharge amount of droplets from a discharge port, the recording considerably depends on the providing density of heating elements of a recording head. That is, it uses a method of jetting  
15 ink to the same pixel position a plurality of times. This however invites problems such that the scanning times of the recording head are inevitably increased and a general printing speed is liable to decrease.

20 Japanese Patent Publication No. 62-48585 provides a multi-level output color ink jet recording head in which a plurality of heating elements are provided in one nozzle so that different discharge amounts of droplets can be discharged from a discharge port. This  
25 is, referred to as, so called, "multi-level heater". For example, in the multi-level heater n heater elements are provided in one nozzle and are separately

connected to a driver so that voltage can be independently applied to each of the heating elements. Further, the sizes of the heating elements are changed so that the heat release values are differentiated from each other in the respective heating elements in one nozzle. In this case, the recording dots by  $n$  heating elements are different from each other and  $\{n C_{n-1} + n C_{n-2} + \dots + n C_2 + n C_1 + 1\}$  kinds of recording dots can be formed by the combination of simultaneously driven heating elements. That is,  $\{n C_{n-1} + n C_{n-2} + \dots + n C_2 + n C_1 + 1\}$  level gradation can be obtained with one nozzle.

However, since in the above-mentioned structure, a driving element such as a driving transistor or the like should be provided so as to correspond to the heating element by 1 : 1, a density  $n$  times greater than the nozzle density is required for the driving element to obtain  $\{n C_{n-1} + n C_{n-2} + \dots + n C_2 + n C_1 + 1\}$  level gradation. Although a bipolar transistor and a N-MOS transistor have been used as a driving element for the heating element, one example of the area length of the driving element taken along a direction along the nozzle is about  $70 \mu\text{m}$ . In a case of, for example, 360 dpi recording head, a providing length of one driving element is  $70/n \mu\text{m}$ . If a recording head is a 720 dpi recording head, the length of  $35/n \mu\text{m}$  is required. As the result, to increase the

density of the driving element, it is required to arrange a transistor at n steps or the like. In this case, control circuit wiring becomes complicated or the size of a recording head substrate must be enlarged.

5 As the result, the structure is liable to lead to the increase of cost, and further, it becomes difficult to adapt the need of miniaturization of the recording head.

Incidentally, with the use of a liquid discharge technology using thermal energy in many fields, in addition to the need for a higher image quality, a technology of satisfactorily discharging various liquids such as a high viscosity liquid or the like and a liquid discharging technology having a higher liquid discharge efficiency as compared to conventional technologies, are recently, increasingly desired. From such viewpoints various liquid discharge technologies are disclosed in, for example, Japanese Patent Publication No. 61-59916, Japanese Patent Application 10 Laid-Open No. 55-81172, Japanese Patent Application 15 Laid-Open No. 59-26270, and the like.

#### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

An object of the present invention is to provide a liquid discharge head, a liquid discharge method and a liquid discharge apparatus, in which a high gradation can be easily obtained and the simplification of a

circuit arrangement and the miniaturization of a recording head can be attained without using a structure in which a plurality of heating elements are provided in one nozzle.

5           Another object of the present invention is to provide a liquid discharge head, a liquid discharge method and a liquid discharge apparatus, in which the volume of a droplet discharged is changed and a concentration change and a dot change on a recording  
10           medium can be realized by controlling the volume of a bubble generated in a liquid flow path.

          Still another object of the present invention is to provide a liquid discharge head comprising a heat generating element for generating thermal energy which  
15           is used for discharging liquid from a discharge port, and a protective layer provided on the heat generating element to protect the heat generating element, wherein the protective layer has a first region with a substantially uniform and desired thickness and a  
20           second region with a substantially uniform thickness thinner than the desired thickness, the volume of liquid droplets discharged from the discharge port is changed by changing electric energy applied to the heat generating element.

25           Still another object of the present invention is to provide a liquid discharge head comprising a heat generating element for generating thermal energy which

is used for discharging liquid from a discharge port, a protective layer provided on the heat generating element to protect the heat generating element and a moving member provided facing the heat generating element and having a free end which is displaced in accordance with generation of a bubble due to the thermal energy, wherein the protective layer has a first region with a substantially uniform and desired thickness and a second region with a substantially uniform thickness thinner than the desired thickness, the volume of liquid droplets discharged from the discharge port is changed by changing electric energy applied to the heat generating element.

Still another object of the present invention is to provide a liquid discharge method using a liquid discharge head having a heat generating element for generating thermal energy which is used for discharging liquid from a discharge port, and a protective layer for protecting the heat generating element, provided on the heat generating element, the protective layer having a first region with a substantially uniform and desired thickness and a second region with a substantially uniform thickness thinner than the desired thickness, wherein a size of a bubble generated on the heat generating element is changed by changing electric energy applied to the heat generating element while keeping a region of the starting point of



bubbling to the second region, whereby the volume of liquid droplets discharged from the discharge port is changed.

Still another object of the present invention is to  
5 provide a liquid discharge method using a liquid  
discharge head having a heat generating element for  
generating thermal energy which is used for discharging  
liquid from a discharge port, a protective layer for  
protecting the heat generating element, provided on the  
10 heat generating element and a moving member provided  
facing the heat generating element and having a free  
end which is displaced in accordance with generation of  
a bubble due to the thermal energy, the protective  
layer having a first region with a substantially  
15 uniform and desired thickness and a second region with  
a substantially uniform thickness thinner than the  
desired thickness, wherein a size of a bubble generated  
on the heat generating element is changed by changing  
electric energy applied to the heat generating element  
20 while keeping a region of the starting point of  
bubbling to the second region, whereby the volume of  
liquid droplets discharged from the discharge port is  
changed.

According to the present invention the volume of a  
25 droplet discharged from one discharge port can be  
easily varied in a plurality of steps. Further a high  
gradation can be attained by selectively changing a

signal inputted to one heat generating element without providing a plurality of heat generating elements in one nozzle. Further, since it is not necessary to arrange a heat generating element at a high density with necessary level, simplification of a circuit arrangement and miniaturization of a recording head can be attained. Additionally, since the present invention has a partially thin protective layer area, it has the effects that the consumption power necessary for obtaining an ordinary amount of liquid discharge can be further lowered than conventional cases.

The present invention provides the protective layer on the heat generation layer has stepwise a first region having a substantially uniform predetermined thickness and a second region having a uniform thickness smaller than the predetermined thickness. According to this arrangement, reaching temperatures at the regions for a predetermined applied energy are different for each other so that digital-like simple gradation recording can be obtained with high feasibility.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a schematic plan view showing a substrate for a liquid discharge head according to one embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 2A is a schematic cross-sectional view

showing the substrate for the head vertically taken along the one dotted chain line 2A-2A in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2B is a schematic cross-sectional view showing the substrate for the head vertically taken along the one dotted chain line 2B-2B in Fig. 1, respectively;

Fig. 3 is a schematic partially-cut perspective view showing a main portion of a liquid discharge head according to one embodiment of the present invention;

Figs. 4A, 4B and 4C are schematic views for explaining the control of discharge amount in a liquid discharge head according to one embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 5 is a schematic cross-sectional view showing a liquid discharge head according to one embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 6 is a schematic partially-cut perspective view showing a main portion of a liquid discharge head of Fig. 5;

Fig. 7 is a schematic partially-cut perspective view showing the liquid discharge head of Fig. 5;

Figs. 8A, 8B and 8C are schematic views for explaining the control of discharge amount in a liquid discharge head according to one embodiment of the present invention; and

Fig. 9 is a liquid discharge apparatus according to one embodiment of the present invention.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

In this specification a term "printing" (or "recording") is used not only in a case where significant information such as characters, figures etc., is formed, but also in a case where an image, a pattern etc., are formed on a medium to be printed in a wide meaning or processing of a medium is carried out, regardless of significance or insignificance, or regardless of visualization so that a human can visually perceive. A term "a printing medium (a medium to be printed)" means not only a paper used in a general printing apparatus, but also an ink-receivable material such as a cloth, a plastic film, a metallic plate, glass, ceramics, wood, leather and the like. Further, a term "ink (sometimes "liquid")" should be widely interpreted as the definition of the above-mentioned "printing" and means a liquid which can be applied to the formation of an image, a pattern etc., by being imparted onto a printing medium, processing of a printing medium, or treatment of ink (for example, solidification or insolubilization of colorant in ink imparted to the printing medium).

Embodiments of the present invention will be described in detail below with reference to drawings. The same reference numerals are designated to the same portions.

Fig. 1 is a schematic plan view showing an area

near the heat generating element on a substrate for a liquid discharge head according to one embodiment of the present invention, Figs. 2A and 2B are schematic cross-sectional views showing the substrate vertically taken to the surface of the substrate along the one-dotted chain line 2A-2A and 2B-2B in Fig. 1, respectively.

In this embodiment, as a substrate 120 for forming a heating element, an Si substrate having no element or a driving IC-mounted Si substrate is used. In a case of the former Si substrate, a heat storage layer comprises  $\text{SiO}_2$ , is formed below a heating resistor by a thermal oxidation process, a sputtering process or a CVD process or the like. In a case of the latter IC-mounted Si substrate, an  $\text{SiO}_2$  heat storage layer is also formed during the production process. In Fig. 2A, the reference numeral 106 denotes a heat storage layer. Then a heating resistor layer 107 composed of TaN,  $\text{HfB}_2$ , TaAl and the like is formed to a thickness of about 50 to 1000 Å by a reactive sputtering process or the like, and a wiring electrode layer 103 of Al etc., is formed to a thickness of about 0.2 to 1.0 μm by a sputtering process. Then to form a wiring pattern shown in Fig. 1 by a photolithography process, the wiring electrode layer and the heating resistor layer are continuously etched by a reactive ion etching process.

To expose a heat generating portion 102 also using

a photolithography process as shown in Fig. 1, a portion of the wiring electrode layer 103 is removed by a wet etching process. Incidentally, the end portion of the wiring electrode layer 103, not shown in Fig. 1 is used as a wire bonding pad in a case of an Si substrate having no element, on the other hand, the end portion thereof is connected to an electrode in the lower portion not shown through a through-hole in an IC mounted Si substrate.

10           Then a first protective layer 108 is formed by a plasma CVD process or the like. Then as shown in Fig. 1, to form a region (second region) 105 where a thin protective layer is formed on the downstream side with respect to the liquid discharge direction in the heating portion 102, an opened pattern is formed in a mask by using, for example, a photolithography process, and a first protective layer 108 is wet-etched using the heating resistor layer 107 as an etching stop layer (stopper). After that a second protective layer 109 is formed using a plasma CVD process or the like. In this embodiment, a region on the heat generating portion other than the second region substantially corresponds to the first region.

25           In the present invention, as explained above, in a case where after the first protective layer 108 is formed and a portion of the first protective layer 108 is etched using the heating resistor layer 107 as an

etching stop layer, the second protective layer 109 is formed, materials of the first protective layer 108 and the second layer 109 may be the same or not. Further, in the present invention, two kinds of protective layers having different properties, particularly, etching properties are laminated and any one of the protective layers, particularly, the upper protective layer is removed by a selective etching process between both protective layers, so that a thin protective layer-formed region 105 may be formed. In the combination of protective layers in such case, for example, a SiN film is formed as the first protective layer 108 (lower layer), a PSG (phosphosilicate glass) film is formed as the second protective layer 109 (upper layer), and a portion of the upper layer, i.e., PSG film is removed by a desired area by a selective etching process using buffered hydrofluoric acid, so that a thin protective layer-formed region 105 can be formed. Alternatively, after the lower layer of SiO<sub>2</sub> film and the upper layer of SiN film are formed, a thin protective layer-formed region 105 can be also formed by selectively etching the upper layer by using hot phosphoric acid. Each thickness of the first and second protective layers may be suitably formed in consideration of the thermal conductivity of a material to be used, the area of the thin protective layer-formed region 105, the discharge amount to be

controlled. However, in the region 105 where at least a protective layer was thinly formed, the protecting layer must be formed in a film thickness such that its functions can be attained. Further, to ensure a  
5 sufficient gradation, the film thickness difference between the thin protective layer-formed region 105 and an ordinary region is desirably about 3000 Å to 9000 Å. In the present invention, the area of the thin protective layer-formed region 105 may be appropriately  
10 set in consideration of the respective materials and film thickness so that a desired discharge amount can be obtained.

Then, a metallic film of Ta or the like which forms a passive state is formed to a thickness of about  
15 1000 Å to 5000 Å by a sputtering process as shown by the reference numeral 110 in Figs. 2A and 2B, as an anti-cavitation layer. Finally, openings for pads are formed at desired positions of wiring layers 103 and 104 by a photolithography process, thereby to form a  
20 substrate 101 of an ink jet recording head.

After the completion of the recording head substrate, as shown in Fig. 3, discharge ports 111 or the like for discharging ink are formed, thereby to complete an ink jet recording head. A liquid flow path  
25 113 is communicated with a common liquid chamber 112 for supplying a recording liquid to each discharge port. The liquid flow path 113 is separated into some



parts by separating walls 121 provided on a top plate 119. The recording liquid is introduced into this common liquid chamber 112 from an external portion of the recording head through a liquid supply opening not shown in accordance with necessity. On the connection of the top plate 119 the heat generating portion 102 is preferably, sufficiently positioned so that it may correspond to each of the liquid flow paths 113. Thus the top plate 119 is connected to the substrate 101 thereby to form the liquid flow paths 113. Further, to the electrode 103 is attached a lead substrate (not shown) having an electrode lead for applying a desired pulse signal from an external portion of the recording head. Thus, an ink jet recording head is completed as shown in Fig. 3.

Incidentally, the formation of the liquid discharge port or liquid flow path etc., is not necessarily carried out by providing a top plate with grooves illustrated in Fig. 3, but may be carried out by forming side walls of the liquid flow path by a patterning process of a photosensitive resin. The present invention is not limited to only the multi-array-type ink jet recording head having the above-mentioned plurality of discharge ports, but it can be applied to the single-array-type ink jet recording head having single liquid discharge port.

Then a liquid discharge head according to another

embodiment of the present invention will be described with reference to Fig. 5. As shown in Fig. 5, after a photosensitive resin (dry film) is applied onto a substrate 101 with a spinner, the resin film is exposed and developed by using a photolithography process so that a second liquid flow path 114 for supplying a bubbling liquid in every heat generating portion 102. The separating wall 115 constituting a movable member is made of metal such as nickel or the like.

Fig. 5 is a schematic cross-sectional view taken along the direction of the liquid flow path, showing a liquid discharge head according to another embodiment of the present invention. Fig. 6 is a schematic partially-cut perspective view showing the main portion of the liquid discharge head. As shown in Figs. 5 and 6, a second liquid flow path 114 for a bubbling liquid is formed on a substrate 101 on which a heat generating portion 102 was provided. On the liquid flow path 114 is provided a first liquid flow path 113 for a discharge liquid directly communicated with a discharge port 111. Between the first and second flow paths 113 and 114 is provided a separating wall 115 made of a material having elasticity such as metal or the like, which wall 115 separates the discharge liquid in the first liquid flow path 113 from the bubbling liquid in the second liquid flow path 114. Incidentally, as described later, when as the bubbling liquid and the

discharge liquid the same liquid is used, the respective common liquid chambers may be commonly used as one chamber.

5 The height of the second liquid flow path 114 is preferably given so that it is smaller than the maximum height of a bubble which is generated by the heat generating portion 102. Particularly, it is preferred that the second liquid flow path 114 is formed in a height smaller than the minimum height of a bubble  
10 which is generated in the thin prospective layer-formed region 105 and the bubble generated in the region 105 is extended to the first liquid flow path 113. Thus, the height of the second liquid flow path 114 may be appropriately set in the most suitable range so that a  
15 desired discharge pressure is given.

Although in the above explanation nickel is used as the separating wall 115 defining a movable member, the separating wall is not limited thereto. As a material which defines the separating wall or the  
20 movable member, a material may be used, which has a sufficient liquid resisting properties to a bubbling liquid and a discharge liquid, and has elasticity for satisfactorily transmitting the bubbling energy to the discharge liquid and which can form fine slits.  
25 Materials of the movable member having a high durability include, metal, such as, in addition to nickel, silver, gold, iron, titanium, aluminum,

platinum, tantalum and the like, alloy of the metal or other metal including stainless steel, phosphor bronze and the like, or resin having a nitrile group such as polyacrylonitrile, butadiene resin, styrene resin,  
5 resin having an amide group such as polyamide and the like, resin having a carboxyl group such as polycarbonate and the like, resin having an aldehyde group such as polyacetal, resin having sulfone group such as polysulfone and the like, other resin such as  
10 liquid crystal polymer and the like, and their compound and the like. Further, high ink-resisting materials preferably include metal such as gold, tungsten, tantalum, nickel, titanium and the like, alloy such as stainless steel, these metal or alloy-coated articles,  
15 or resin having an amide group such as polyamide, resin having an aldehyde group such as polyacetal and the like, resin having a ketone group such as polyetherether ketone and the like, resin having an imide group such as polyimide and the like, resin  
20 having a hydroxide group such as phenol resin and the like, polyalkylene resin such as polyethylene, polypropylene and the like, resin having an epoxy group such as epoxy resin and the like, resin having an amino group such as melamine resin and the like, resin having  
25 a methylene group such as xylene resin and the like and their compound, and further ceramics such as silicon dioxide and the like.

As a material of the separating wall the same material as that of the above-mentioned movable member can be used. The separating wall may be integrally formed with the movable member. The thickness of the separating wall can be determined in consideration of the material quality and shape etc., from the viewpoints of the realization of its strength and satisfactory operations of the movable member, and is preferably about 0.5 to 10  $\mu\text{m}$ .

Incidentally, When, for example, a bubbling liquid is different from a discharge liquid and the prevention of the both liquids from being mixed is required, the width of a gap (slit) between the movable member and the separating wall have such a distance that meniscus is formed between the both liquids and the communication with the liquids is only prevented. For example, when about 2 cP of a liquid is used as a bubbling liquid and 100 cP or more of a liquid is used as a discharge liquid, even about 5  $\mu\text{m}$  of the width can prevent mixing of the liquids, but 3  $\mu\text{m}$  or less of the width is desirable.

A part of the separating wall 115 positioned at a projected space of the heat generating portion 102 in the upward direction (which is referred to as "a discharge pressure generation region" that is a region A and a bubble generation region B in Fig. 5) has a free end in the discharge port side (the downstream

side of a liquid flow) due to a slit 118, and defines a cantilever beam-shaped movable member 116 having a support in a common chamber (112, 117) side, whereby the movable member 116 is provided facing the bubble  
5 generation region B. Thus, the movable member 116 is operated in an arrow direction in Fig. 5 in such a manner that it is opened in the first flow path 113 side by bubbling of a bubbling liquid as described later. In Fig. 6, on a substrate 101 on which wiring  
10 electrodes 103 and 104 for applying an electric signal to this heat generating portion were provided, is also provided a separating wall 115 through a space which defines a second liquid flow path 114.

After the completion of a recording head substrate,  
15 as shown in Fig. 7, discharge ports 111 or the like for discharging ink are formed, thereby to complete a liquid discharge head. A liquid flow path 113 is communicated with a common liquid chamber 112 for supplying a recording liquid to each discharge port.  
20 The liquid flow path 113 is separated into some parts by separating walls provided on a top plate 119. The discharge liquid is introduced into this common liquid chamber 112 from an external portion of the head through a liquid supply opening not shown in accordance  
25 with necessity. On the connection of the top plate 119, it is preferred that the heat generating portion 102 and the movable member 116 are sufficiently

positioned respectively, so that they may correspond to each of the liquid flow paths 113. Thus, the top plate 119 is connected to the substrate 101, thereby to form liquid discharge ports 111 communicated with a  
5 discharge pressure generation region A. Further, to the electrodes 103 and 104 are attached lead substrates (not shown) each having an electrode lead for applying a desired pulse signal from a external portion of the head. Thus, a liquid discharge head shown in Fig. 7 is  
10 completed.

As the bubbling liquid and the discharge liquid the same liquid may be used or different liquids may be used. In a case where the same liquid is used, various liquids can be used if the liquid is not deteriorated  
15 with heat applied by a heat generating portion, deposit is difficult to be generated on a heat generating portion by heating, a reversible change of the vaporization and condensation can be performed with heat, and the liquid does not deteriorate the liquid  
20 flow path, the movable member or the separating wall or the like.

As a first liquid (a discharge liquid), which is used for recording among such liquids, ink having a composition used in a conventional recording device can  
25 be used.

On the other hand, in a case where the bubbling liquid and the discharge liquid are different liquid

from each other, as the bubbling liquid, liquid having the above-mentioned properties may be used. For example such liquids include methanol, ethanol, n-propanol, isopropanol, n-hexane, n-heptane, n-octane, toluene, xylene, methylene dichloride, trichloroethylene, "Freon TF", "Freon BF" (Both Freons are trade names of Du Pont Co.), ethyl ether, dioxane, cyclohexane, methyl acetate, ethyl acetate, acetone, methyl ethyl ketone, water and their mixture. On the other hand, as the discharge liquid in this case, various liquids can be used regardless of the presence or absence of bubbling properties and thermal properties. Particularly, even a liquid having low bubbling properties, which was conventionally difficult to discharge, a liquid which is liable to change in properties or deteriorate with heat or a liquid having a high viscosity or the like may be used.

In the above descriptions, although a configuration was explained, in which a thin protective layer-formed region 105 was provided on the downstream side with respect to the liquid discharge direction, the region 105 may be formed on any portion on the heat generating portion 102. However, to surely propagate the power of a bubble to liquid, the region 105 is preferably formed on the front portion in the liquid discharge direction, as mentioned above. Although single region 105 is formed on each of heat generating



portions 102, a plurality of regions may be formed thereon.

Alternatively, the present invention includes a configuration in which a flow path group having a structure shown in Fig. 3 and a flow path group having a structure shown in Fig. 7 are closely provided and both flow paths are independently used. Additionally, a reference numeral 1 denotes a region where a driving circuit having a plurality of functional elements provided for independently driving a plurality of heat generating portions is provided inside of the substrate 101 on which a plurality of heat generating portions.

Fig. 9 is a schematic perspective view showing one example of a liquid discharge device, to which a liquid discharge head is attached, according to the present invention. In Fig. 9, the reference numeral 601 is a liquid discharge head produced by the above-mentioned method. This head 601 is mounted on a carriage 607 engaged with the spiral groove 605 of a lead screw 606 which is rotated through driving force transmission gears 603 and 604 while interlocking the regular and reverse rotation of a driving motor 602, and is reciprocated in directions of arrows a and b together with the carriage 607 along a guide 608 by the power of the driving motor 602. A paper pressing plate 610 for a printing paper P which is carried on a platen 609 by a recording medium supply device not shown presses the

printing paper P against the platen 609 over the direction of carriage movement.

Photocouplers 611 and 612 are provided in the vicinity of one end of the lead screw 606. These  
5 photocouplers 611 and 612 are home position detecting means which confirm the presence of the lever 607a of the carriage 607 in this area and switching of the rotational direction of the driving motor 602.

In Fig. 9 the reference numeral 613 denotes a  
10 supporting member for supporting a cap member 614 covering a front face of the discharge port of the above-mentioned liquid discharge head. Further the reference numeral 615 denotes an ink suction means which sucks ink collected in the internal portion of a  
15 cap member by discharging etc., from the head 601. The restoration of suction in the head 601 is carried out by this suction means 615 through an opening 616 in the cap. The reference numeral 617 denotes a cleaning blade, and the numeral 618 denotes a moving member  
20 which can move the blade in the front and rear directions (which is a direction vertical to the moving direction of the above-mentioned carriage 607). The blade 617 and the moving member 618 are supported on a body supporter 619. The blade 617 is not limited to  
25 the configuration shown in Fig. 9, but may be another well known cleaning blade. The reference numeral 620 denotes a lever which starts suction in the suction

restoration. The lever 620 is moved as a cam 621 engaged with the carriage 607 is moved. The driving force from the driving motor 602 is controlled with a well known transmission means such as a clutch switch or the like. A liquid discharge controller which send a signal to the heat generating portion 102 provided in the head 601 and performs the above-mentioned driving control of each mechanism is provided on a device body side, and the controller is not shown in Fig. 9.

10           The liquid discharge apparatus 600 having the above-mentioned configuration records while the head 601 is reciprocated over the paper P which is a material to be recorded, which is carried on the platen with the recording material supply device not shown.

15           The present invention can be efficiently applied to a full-line type recording head having a length corresponding to the maximum width of the recording medium recordable with a recording device. As such a recording head, any configuration may be used, in which the length is satisfied by combination of a plurality of recording head or one recording head is integrally formed.

20           Further, with types or numbers of the recording heads mounted, in addition to only one recording head provided in accordance with for example single color ink, a plurality of recording heads provided in accordance with a plurality kinds of ink may be used.

That is any recording head may be formed integrally or by the combination of the recording heads. The present invention is extremely efficient for a recording device provided with at least one recording mode for different colors or full colors by mixing colors.

The present invention will be concretely described using some examples. However, the present invention is not limited to only the examples.

#### Example 1

As shown in Figs. 1 and 2A and 2B, above an Si substrate 120 are formed a TaN layer 107 to a thickness of about 500 Å as a heating resistor by a reactive sputtering process, and Al layers 103, 104 to a thickness of about 5500 Å as electrode wiring by a sputtering process. Then Al is removed by wet-etching to expose a heat generating portion 102 shown by 102 in Fig. 1 using a photolithography process. The area of thus formed heat generating portion was  $40 \times 150 \mu\text{m}^2$ .

Then, a PSG film is formed to a thickness of about 7000 Å as a protective layer by a plasma CVD process, as shown in Fig. 2. Then, to form a pattern for opening on a thin protective layer-formed region 105 by a photolithography process as shown in Fig. 1, the PSG film is wet-etched using a buffered hydrofluoric acid, while using the TaN layer 107 of the heating resistor as an etching stop layer (stopper). The area of thus formed protective film-removed region was  $42 \times 50 \mu\text{m}^2$ .

An SiN film was formed on the resultant structure to a thickness of 4000 Å as a second protective layer by a plasma CVD process. Further, a Ta film is formed to a thickness of 2500 Å by a sputtering process and an opening for a desired pad is performed, whereby an ink jet recording head substrate (board) of the present example was prepared.

An ink jet recording head was produced by connecting a grooved top plate integrated with a discharge port plate provided with a discharge port having a diameter of 30 µm to this substrate.

Droplets whose discharge amount is 80 ng were given by applying electric voltage pulse (width: 5µs, height: 25 V) which heats to a temperature at which a bubble A is generated over the whole heat generating portion 102 by the film boiling, as shown in Fig. 4A. Further, a bubble B was generated by the film boiling in only the thin protective layer-formed region 105 as shown in Fig. 5B, by applying about 2/3 voltage necessary to generate a bubble A from the whole heat generating portion with a pulse width having the same level, thereby obtaining droplets having a discharge amount of 20 ng.

Incidentally, although three gradations (including non-discharge in Fig. 4C) are shown in the present example, a further multi-leveling can be performed by forming the thickness of the protective layer on the

heat generating portion in a stepped-shape having three steps or more. Further, although the bubble power is controlled by an applied voltage to a heater resistor, this control is not limited to the applied voltage, but  
5 can be controlled by pulse length, pulse shape or the like.

#### Example 2

After a heating resistor and a wiring material were formed by the same manner as in Example 1, an SiN  
10 film was formed on the substrate on which the heat generating element is exposed to a thickness of about 7000 Å as a first protective layer and a PSG film was formed thereon to a thickness of about 4000 Å. After that, to form a thin protective layer-formed region  
15 in the heat generating portion, a photo resist was applied and patterned. The PSG film was then wet-etched using buffered hydrofluoric acid while using the above-described photo resist as a mask. After that, a Ta film which is used as an anti-cavitation  
20 layer and an ink resisting layer was formed to about a thickness of 2500 Å and an opening was formed, whereby an ink jet recording head substrate was prepared, in the same manner as in Example 1.

An ink jet recording head was produced using thus  
25 formed substrate, in the same manner as in Example 1. When an ink discharge was performed by controlling an applied voltage as in Example 1, a three-gradation

discharge can be conducted as in Example 1.

### Example 3

After a heating resistor and a wiring material were formed by the same manner as in Example 1, an  $\text{SiO}_2$  film was formed on the substrate on which the heat generating element is exposed to a thickness of about 7000 Å as a first protective layer and an  $\text{SiN}$  film was formed thereon to a thickness of about 4000 Å. After that, to form a thin protective layer-formed region in the heat generating portion, a photo resist was applied and patterned. The  $\text{SiN}$  film was wet-etched using hot phosphoric acid while using the above-described photo resist as a mask. After that, a Ta film which is used as an anti-cavitation layer and an ink resisting layer was formed to about a thickness of 2500 Å and an opening was formed, whereby an ink jet recording head substrate was prepared, in the same manner as in Example 1.

An ink jet recording head was produced using thus formed substrate, in the same manner as in Example 1. When an ink discharge was performed by controlling an applied voltage as in Example 1, a three-gradation discharge can be conducted as in Example 1.

### Example 4

As shown in Figs. 1 and 2A and 2B, above a Si substrate 120 are formed a TaN layer 107 to a thickness of about 500 Å as a heating resistor by a reactive

sputtering process, and Al layers 103, 104 to a thickness of about 5500 Å as electrode wiring by a sputtering process. Then Al is removed by wet-etching to expose a heat generating portion 102 shown by 102 in Fig. 1 using a photolithography process. The area of thus formed heat generating portion was  $40 \times 100 \mu\text{m}^2$ .

Then, a PSG film is formed to a thickness of about 7000 Å as a protective layer by a plasma CVD process, as shown in Figs. 2A and 2B. Then, to form a pattern for opening on a thin protective layer-formed region 105 by a photolithography process as shown in Fig. 1, the PSG film is wet-etched using a buffered hydrofluoric acid, while using the TaN layer 107 of the heating resistor as an etching stop layer (stopper). The area of thus formed protective film-removed region was  $42 \times 40 \mu\text{m}^2$ .

An SiN film was formed on this structure to a thickness of 4000 Å as a second protective layer by a plasma CVD process. Further, a Ta film is formed to a thickness of 2500 Å by a sputtering process and an opening for a desired pad is performed, whereby a liquid discharge head substrate (board) of the present example was prepared.

To form a flow path wall which defines a second liquid flow path 114 between the respective heat generating portions as shown in Figs. 5 and 7, a dry film having a thickness of 15  $\mu\text{m}$  is applied with a



spinner. After that each of flow paths was formed by using a photolithography process. A separating wall 115 was provided by use of a nickel plate having a thickness of 5  $\mu\text{m}$ . A movable member 116 is formed in the separating wall 115 every flow path. The size of the separating wall 115 was  $40 \times 250 \mu\text{m}^2$ .

A liquid discharge head shown in Figs. 3, 4A to 4C and 5 was produced by providing a grooved top plate integrated with a discharge port plate provided with a discharge port having a diameter of 30  $\mu\text{m}$  on this substrate. Then, as a bubbling liquid and a discharge liquid the liquids having the following compositions were used and the liquid discharge operations were confirmed.

Bubbling liquid

ethanol	40 wt %
water	60 wt %

Discharge liquid (dye ink : viscosity 2 cp)

dye (C.I. Hood Black 2)	3 wt %
diethylene glycol	10 wt %
thiodiglycol	5 wt %
ethanol	2 wt %
water	the remainder

Droplets whose discharge amount is 80 ng were given by applying electric voltage pulse (width: 5  $\mu\text{s}$ , height: 25 V) which heats to a temperature at which a

bubble A is generated over the heat generating portion 102 by the film boiling, to a heat generating portion, as shown in Fig. 8A. Further, a bubble B was generated by the film boiling in only the thin protective layer-formed region 105 as shown in Fig. 8B, by applying about 2/3 voltage necessary to generate a bubble A from the whole heat generating portion with a pulse width having the same level, thereby obtaining droplets having a discharge amount of 20 ng.

Incidentally, although three gradations including non-discharge in Fig. 8C are shown in the present example, a further multi-leveling can be performed by forming the thickness of the protective layer on the heat generating portion in a stepped-shape having three steps or more. Further, although the bubble power is controlled by an applied voltage to a heater resistor, this control is not limited to the applied voltage, but can be controlled by pulse length, pulse shape or the like.

#### Example 5

After a heating resistor and a wiring material were formed by the same manner as in Example 1, an SiN film was formed on the substrate on which the heat generating element is exposed to a thickness of about 7000 Å as a first protective layer and a PSG film was formed thereon to a thickness of about 4000 Å. After that, to form a thin protective layer-formed region 105

in the heat generating portion, a photo resist was applied and patterned so that the PSG film was then wet-etched using buffered hydrofluoric acid while using the above-described photo resist as a mask. After that, a Ta film which is used as an anti-cavitation layer and an ink resisting layer was formed to about a thickness of 2500 Å and an opening was formed, whereby an ink jet recording head substrate was prepared, in the same manner as in Example 4.

10 An ink jet recording head was produced using thus formed substrate, in the same manner as in Example 4. When an ink discharge was performed by controlling an applied voltage as in Example 4, a three-gradation discharge can be conducted as in Example 4.

15 Example 6

After a heating resistor and a wiring material were formed by the same manner as in Example 4, a SiO<sub>2</sub> film was formed on the substrate on which the heat generating element is exposed to a thickness of about 7000 Å as a first protective layer and a SiN film was formed thereon to a thickness of about 4000 Å. After that, to form a thin protective layer-formed region in the heat generating portion, a photo resist was applied and patterned so that the SiN film was wet-etched using hot phosphoric acid while using the above-described photo resist as a mask. After that, a Ta film which is used as an anti-cavitation layer and

an ink resisting layer was formed to about a thickness of 2500 Å and an opening was formed, whereby an ink jet recording head substrate was prepared, in the same manner as in Example 4.

5           An ink jet recording head was produced using thus formed substrate, in the same manner as in Example 1. When an ink discharge was performed by controlling an applied voltage as in Example 1, a three-gradation discharge could be conducted as in Example 1.

10           Example 7

The same ink jet recording head as in Example 1 was produced except that the layer of a heating resistor was formed in the following manner.

15           In Example 7, as the layer of a heating resistor a polycrystalline silicon film is formed using a plasma CVD process. After that, impurity atoms such as B, P, As or the like were implanted into the polycrystalline silicon film using an ion-implantation process. Then, to uniformly diffuse the impurities into the heating resistor layer, annealing was carried out at 500 to 20   600°C for 30 min. to 1 hr. Then, the heating resistor layer was patterned using a photolithography process.

25           In this example, a heating resistor having a positive temperature coefficient can be formed by doping the above-mentioned impurities onto a heating resistor layer composed of polycrystalline silicon. Thus, with the rise of the environmental temperature a

resistance value of the heating resistor is increased.  
On the other hand, upon the temperature rise of the  
recording head, the viscosity of ink having the  
thixotropy properties is lowered and the ink is easy to  
5 move. Therefore, the influence caused by the  
temperature rise to energy applied to the heat  
generating portion tends to be cancelled. As a result,  
the amount of the liquid droplets discharged in  
accordance with the energy applied to the heat  
10 generating portion can be suitably controlled  
regardless of the influence of the temperature rise.

In this example, when an ink discharge was  
performed by controlling an applied voltage as in  
Example 1, a three-gradation discharge could be  
15 conducted as in Example 1.

#### Example 8

The same ink jet recording head as in Example 4  
was produced except that as the layer of a heating  
resistor the same material was used as in Example 7.

20 In this example, when an ink discharge was  
performed by controlling an applied voltage as in  
Example 1, a three-gradation discharge could be  
conducted as in Example 4.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A liquid discharge head comprising a heat  
generating element for generating thermal energy which  
is used for discharging liquid from a discharge port,  
5 and a protective layer provided on said heat generating  
element to protect said heat generating element,

wherein said protective layer has a first region  
with a substantially uniform and desired thickness and  
a second region with a substantially uniform thickness  
10 thinner than said desired thickness, the volume of  
liquid droplets discharged from said discharge port is  
changed by changing electric energy applied to said  
heat generating element.

15 2. A liquid discharge head according to claim 1,  
wherein said second region is provided on a side closer  
to said discharge port than said first region.

20 3. A liquid discharge head according to claim 1,  
wherein said protective layer is composed of plural  
layered protective layers, said first region is  
composed of said plural layered protective layers, and  
any protective layer of said plural layered protective  
layers is removed in said second region.

25 4. A liquid discharge head according to claim 3,  
wherein said second region is formed by forming the

upper protective layer after etching the lower protective layer.

5. A liquid discharge head according to claim 4,  
5 wherein said lower protective layer is composed of phosphosilicate glass film, said upper protective layer is composed of SiN film, and said etching is conducted with buffered hydrofluoric acid.

10 6. A liquid discharge head according to claim 3, wherein said plural layered protective layers are composed of materials each having different etching properties, and said second region is formed by forming said plural layered protective layers and subsequently  
15 by selectively etching only the upper layer.

7. A liquid discharge head according to claim 6,  
wherein said lower protective layer is composed of SiN film, said upper protective layer is composed of  
20 phosphosilicate glass film, and said selective etching is conducted with buffered hydrofluoric acid.

8. A liquid discharge head according to claim 6,  
wherein said lower protective layer is composed of SiO<sub>2</sub>  
25 film, said upper protective layer is composed of SiN film, and said selective etching is conducted with hot-hydrofluoric acid.

9. A liquid discharge head according to claim 1, wherein said heat generating element is composed of material having a positive temperature coefficient.

5           10. A liquid discharge head according to claim 1, wherein said heat generating element is provided in plural numbers, a driving circuit having a plurality of function devices provided for independently driving said plurality of heat generating element is provided  
10 within the substrate on which said heat generating element is provided.

11. A liquid discharge head comprising a heat  
generating element for generating thermal energy which  
15 is used for discharging liquid from a discharge port, a protective layer provided on said heat generating element to protect said heat generating element and a moving member provided facing said heat generating element and having a free end which is displaced in  
20 accordance with generation of a bubble due to said thermal energy,

wherein said protective layer has a first region with a substantially uniform and desired thickness and a second region with a substantially uniform thickness  
25 thinner than said desired thickness, the volume of liquid droplets discharged from said discharge port is changed by changing electric energy applied to said



heat generating element.

12. A liquid discharge head according to claim  
11, wherein said second region is provided on a side  
5 closer to said discharge port than said first region.

13. A liquid discharge head according to claim  
11, wherein said protective layer is composed of plural  
layered protective layers, said first region is  
10 composed of said plural layered protective layers, and  
any protective layer of said plural layered protective  
layers is removed in said second region.

14. A liquid discharge head according to claim  
15 13, wherein said second region is formed by forming the  
upper protective layer after etching the lower  
protective layer.

15. A liquid discharge head according to claim  
20 14, wherein said lower protective layer is composed of  
phosphosilicate glass film, said upper protective layer  
is composed of SiN film, and said etching is conducted  
with buffered hydrofluoric acid.

25 16. A liquid discharge head according to claim  
13, wherein said plural layered protective layers are  
composed of materials having different etching

properties to each other, and said second region is formed by forming said plural layered protective layers and subsequently by selectively etching only the upper layer.

5

17. A liquid discharge head according to claim 16, wherein said lower protective layer is composed of SiN film, said upper protective layer is composed of phosphosilicate glass film, and said selective etching is conducted with buffered hydrofluoric acid.

10

18. A liquid discharge head according to claim 16, wherein said lower protective layer is composed of SiO<sub>2</sub> film, said upper protective layer is composed of SiN film, and said selective etching is conducted with hot-hydrofluoric acid.

15

19. A liquid discharge head according to claim 11, wherein said heat generating element is composed of polycrystalline silicon.

20

20. A liquid discharge head according to claim 11, wherein said heat generating element is provided in plural numbers, a driving circuit having a plurality of function devices provided for independently driving said plurality of heat generating element is provided within the substrate on which said heat generating

25

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element is provided.

21. A liquid discharge apparatus providing the liquid discharge head according to claim 1 or 11 and a member for providing said liquid discharge head.

22. A liquid discharge method using a liquid discharge head having a heat generating element for generating thermal energy which is used for discharging liquid from a discharge port, and a protective layer for protecting said heat generating element, provided on said heat generating element, said protective layer having a first region with a substantially uniform and desired thickness and a second region with a substantially uniform thickness thinner than said desired thickness,

wherein a size of a bubble generated on said heat generating element is changed by changing electric energy applied to said heat generating element while keeping a region of the starting point of bubbling to said second region, whereby the volume of liquid droplets discharged from said discharge port is changed.

23. A liquid discharge method using a liquid discharge head having a heat generating element for generating thermal energy which is used for discharging

liquid from a discharge port, a protective layer for  
protecting said heat generating element, provided on  
said heat generating element and a moving member  
provided facing said heat generating element and having  
5 a free end which is displaced in accordance with  
generation of a bubble due to said thermal energy, said  
protective layer having a first region with a  
substantially uniform and desired thickness and a  
second region with a substantially uniform thickness  
10 thinner than said desired thickness,

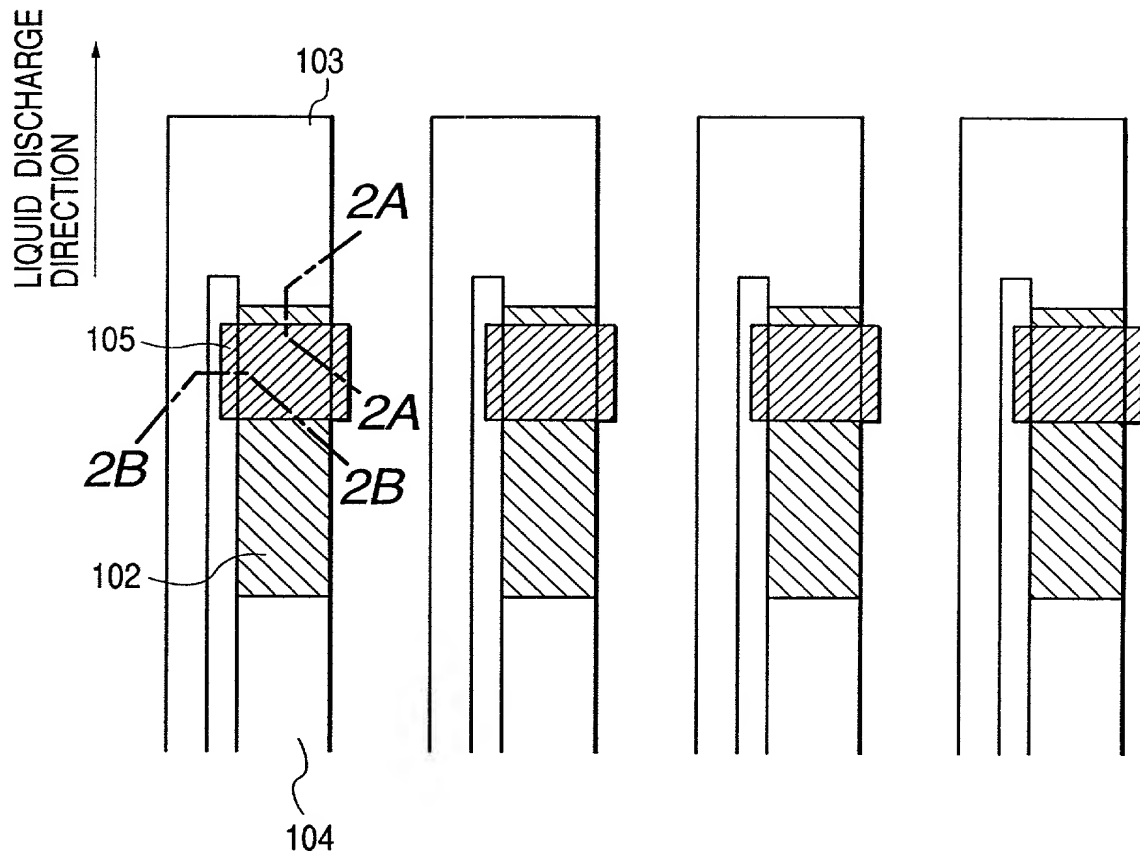
wherein a size of a bubble generated on said heat  
generating element is changed by changing electric  
energy applied to said heat generating element while  
keeping a region of the starting point of bubbling to  
15 said second region, whereby the volume of liquid  
droplets discharged from said discharge port is  
changed.

# ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

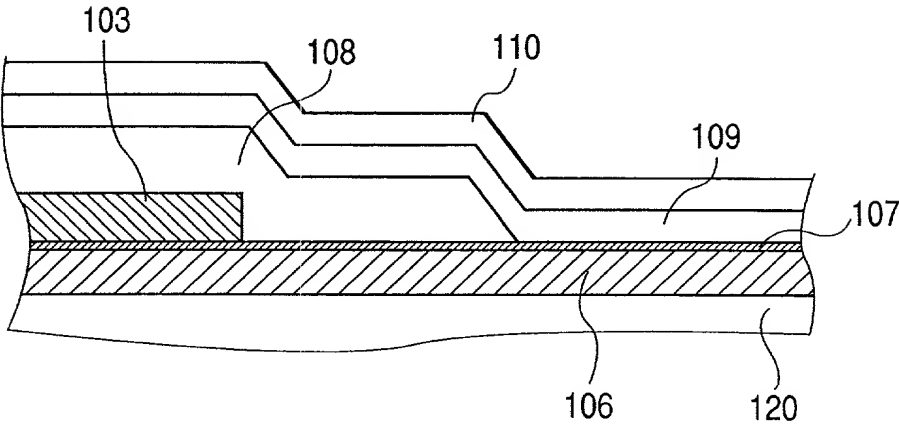
The invention provides a liquid discharge head, a substrate for the head, a liquid discharge method, and a liquid discharge apparatus, in which a high gradation  
5 can be easily obtained and simplification of a circuit formation and miniaturization of a recording head can be achieved. According to the present invention, a liquid discharge head comprises a heat generating element for generating thermal energy which is used for  
10 discharging liquid from a discharge port, and a protective layer for protecting the heat generating element, provided on the heat generating element. In the discharge head, the protective layer has a first region with a substantially uniform and desired  
15 thickness and a second region with a substantially uniform thickness thinner than said desired thickness, the volume of liquid droplets discharged from the discharge port is changed by changing electric energy applied to the heat generating element.

20

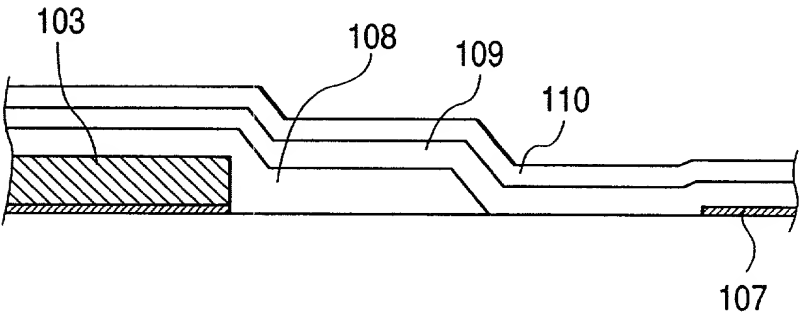
FIG. 1



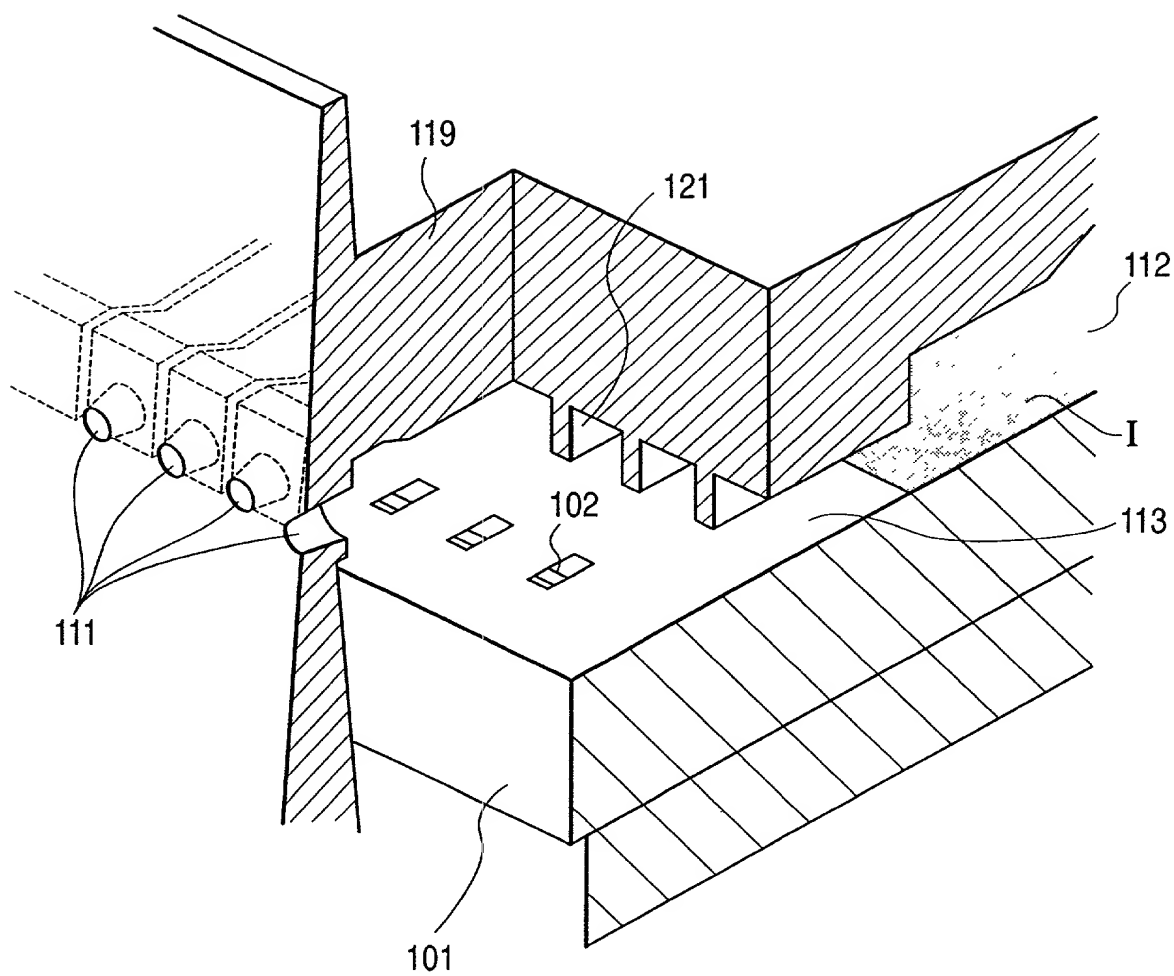
**FIG. 2A**



**FIG. 2B**



*FIG. 3*





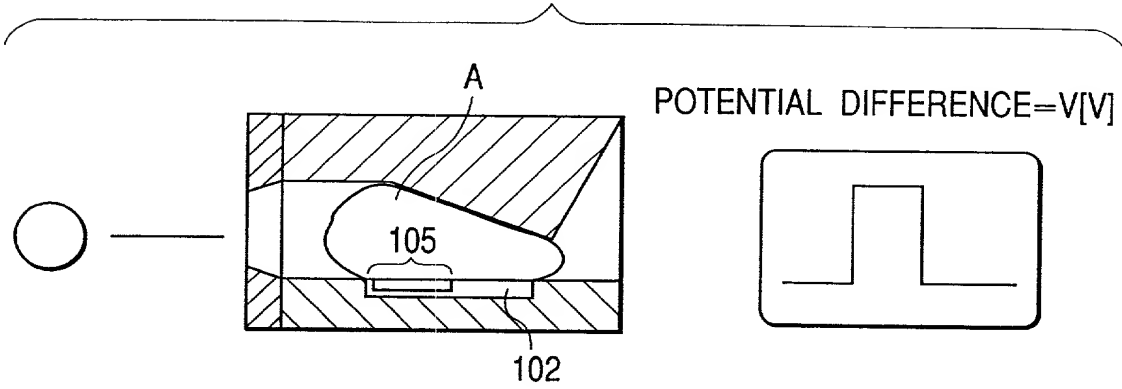
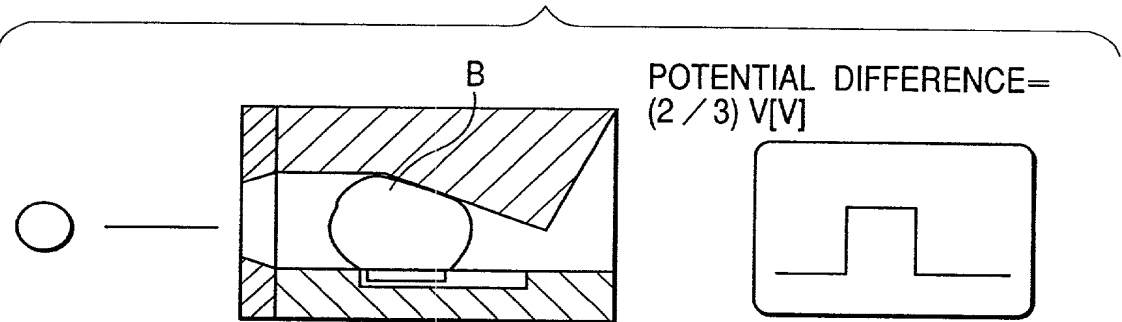
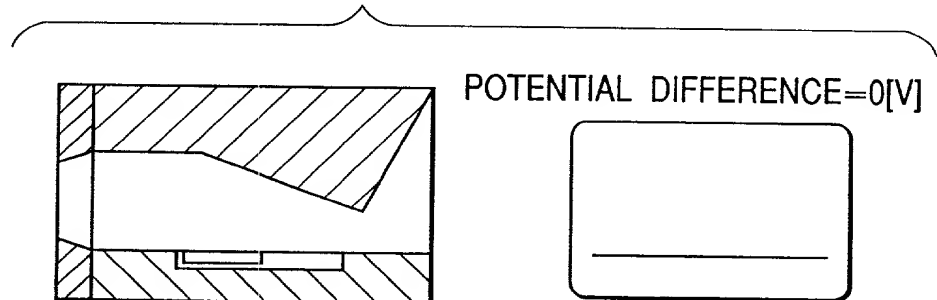
*FIG. 4A**FIG. 4B**FIG. 4C*

FIG. 5

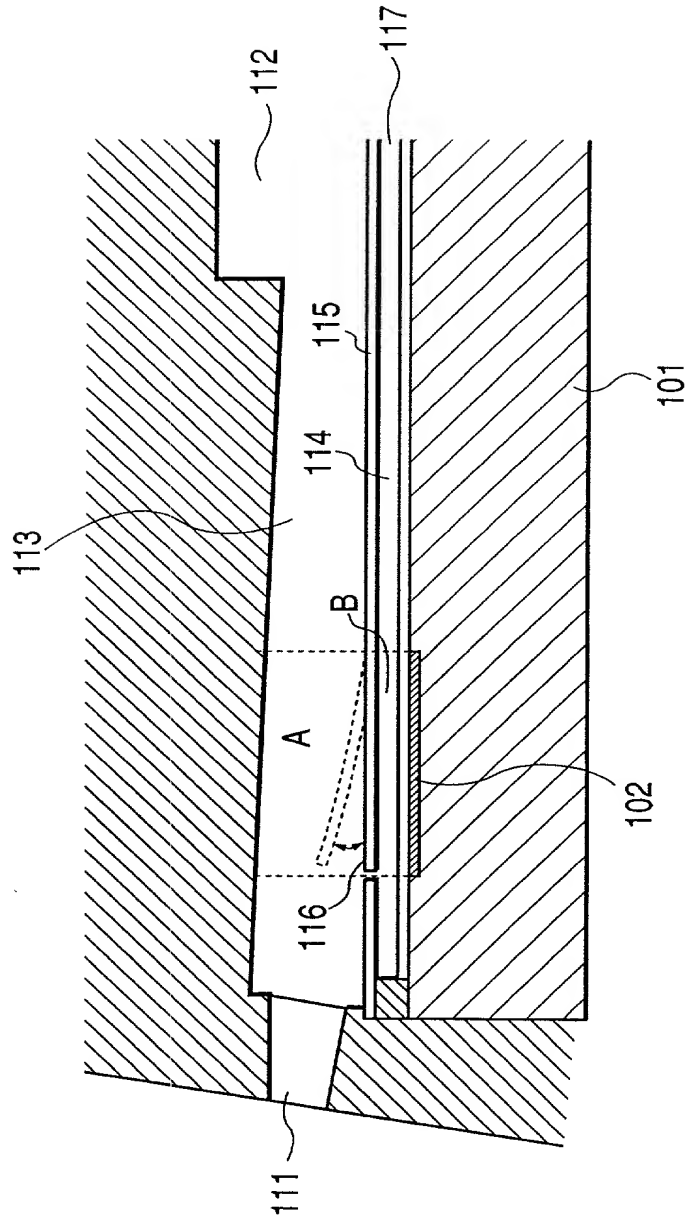
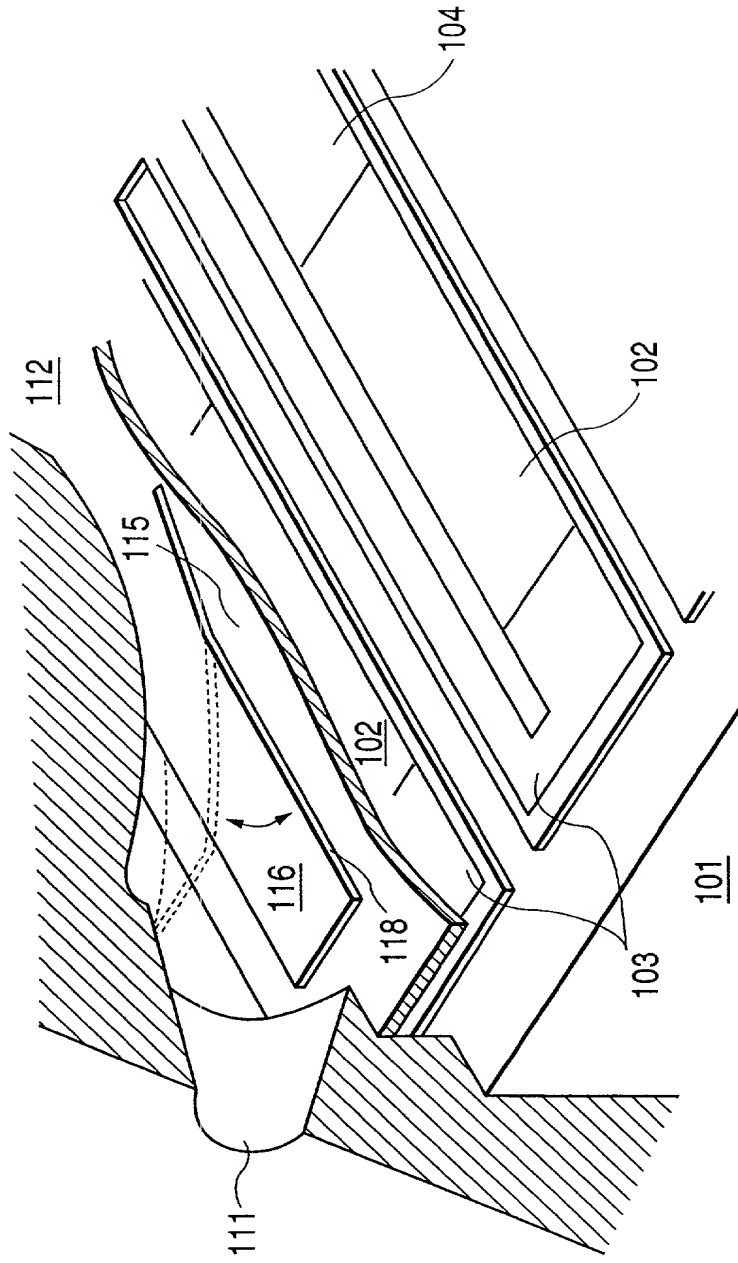
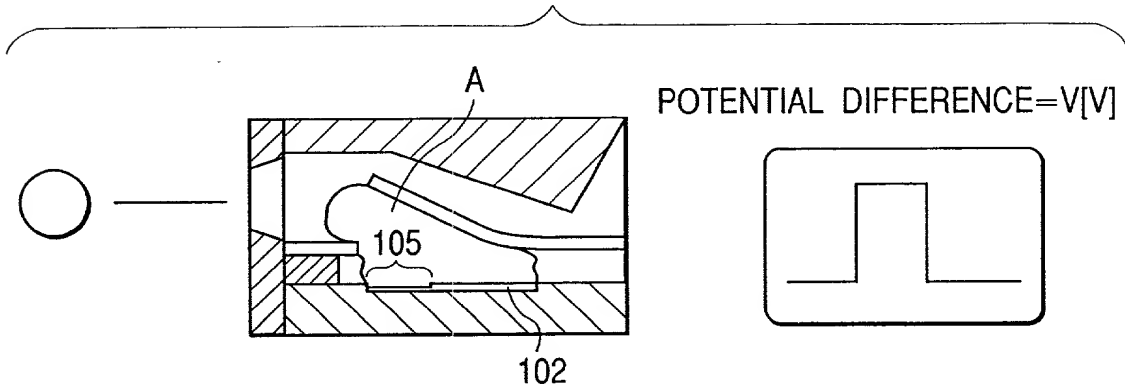


FIG. 6

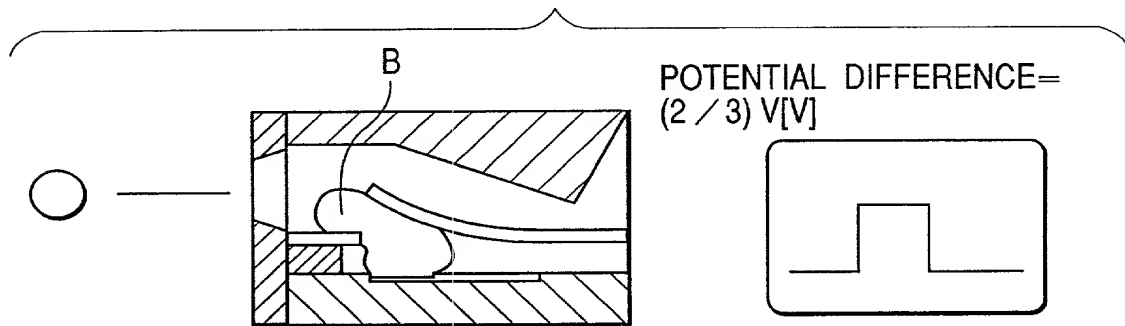




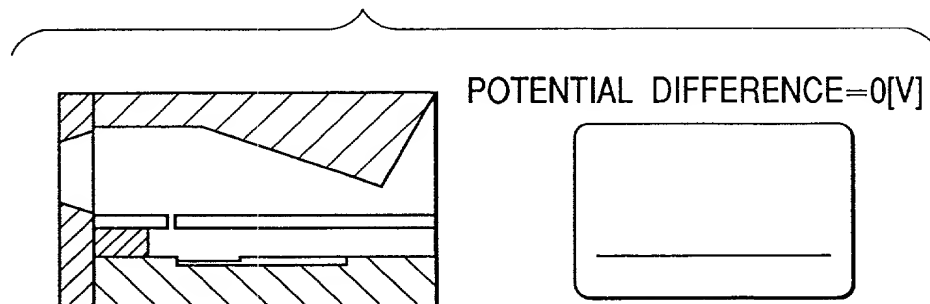
**FIG. 8A**

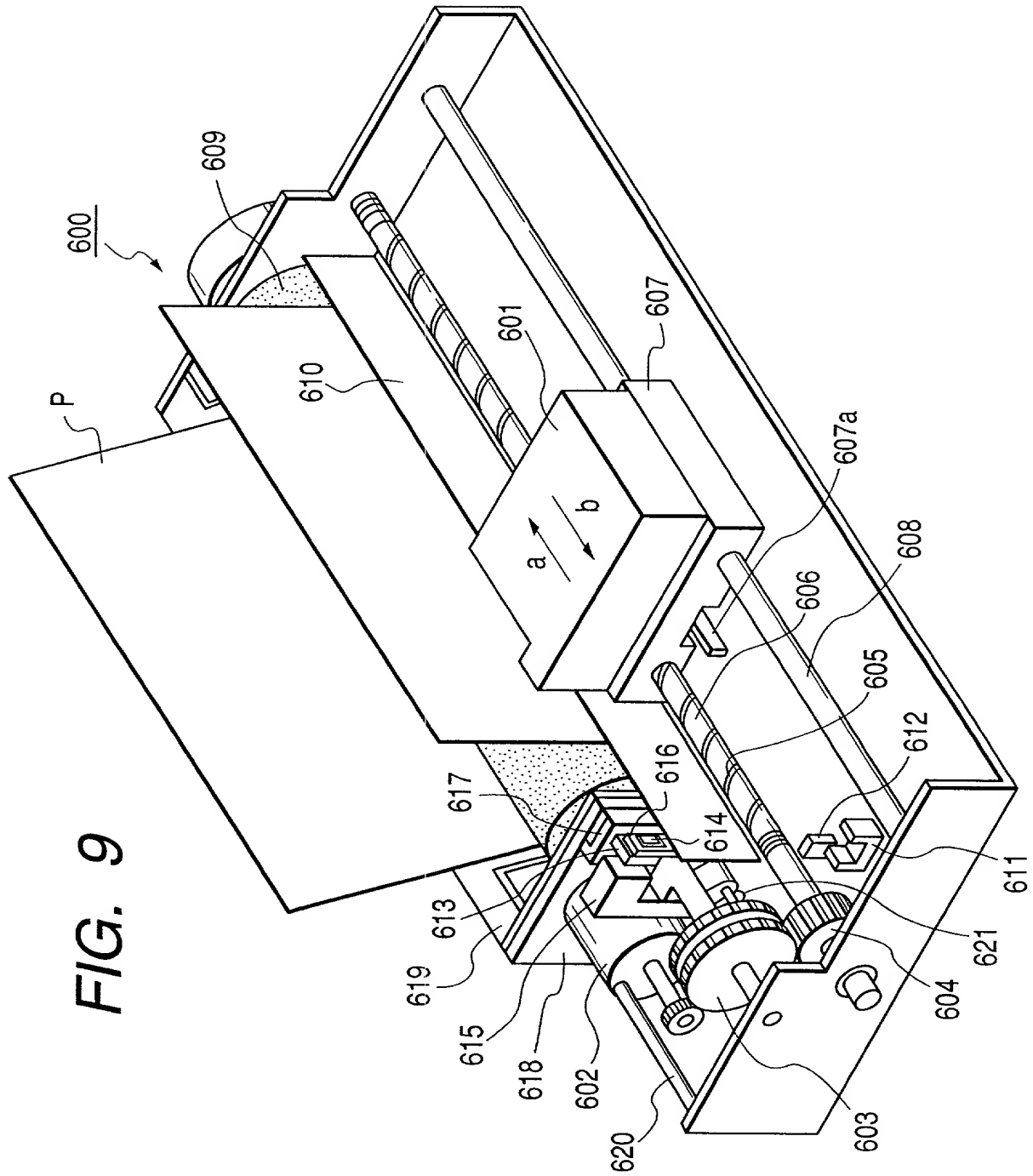


**FIG. 8B**



**FIG. 8C**





**COMBINED DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY  
FOR PATENT APPLICATION**  
(Page 1)

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name;

I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled

LIQUID DISCHARGE HEAD, LIQUID DISCHARGE METHOD, AND LIQUID DISCHARGE APPARATUS

the specification of which ☒ is attached hereto ☐ was filed on \_\_\_\_\_ as United States Application No. or PCT International Application No. \_\_\_\_\_ and was amended on \_\_\_\_\_ (if applicable).

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to patentability as defined in 37 CFR §1.56.

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under 35 U.S.C. §119(a)-(d) or §365(b), of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate, or § 365(a) of any PCT international application which designates at least one country other than the United States, listed below and have also identified below any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate, or PCT international application having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed:

<u>Country</u>	<u>Application No.</u>	<u>Filed (Day/Mo./Yr.)</u>	<u>(Yes/No) Priority Claimed</u>
Japan	10-245471	31 August 1998	Yes
Japan	10-245988	31 August 1998	Yes

I hereby claim the benefit under 35 U.S.C. § 120 of any United States application(s), or § 365(c) of any PCT international application designating the United States, listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States or PCT international application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. § 112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to patentability as defined in 37 C.F.R. § 1.56 which became available between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application.

<u>Application No.</u>	<u>Filed (Day/Mo./Yr.)</u>	<u>Status (Patented, Pending, Abandoned)</u>
------------------------	----------------------------	--

I hereby appoint the practitioners associated with the firm and Customer Number provided below to prosecute this application and to transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith, and direct that all correspondence be addressed to the address associated with that Customer Number:

**FITZPATRICK, CELLA, HARPER & SCINTO**  
Customer Number: 05514

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

Full Name of Sole or First Inventor MASAHIKO KUBOTA

Inventor's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Citizen/Subject of Japan

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(Page 2)

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